Durkheim

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Introduction

This chapter will consider Durkheim's principal works and all the main concepts associated with them: *The Division of Labor in Society*, *The Rules of Sociological Method*, *Suicide*, and *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*.

A detailed analysis will be dedicated to Durkheim's theory of social facts, his most enduring contribution to sociological theory, and his concept of "anomie."

The text will also expose Durkheim's theory of the origin of religion using the AETR scheme this author worked out. AETR is an acronym for Association, Effervescence, Totem, and Rites.

The topic of causal explanation and the method of concomitant variations will be covered using examples to make Durkheim's methodology clearer.

The final section will feature scholars who criticized Durkheim's methodological collectivism and explanations for suicide.

The Theory of Social Facts

Durkheim's main works are fewer in number than Marx's, and this will allow us to present them all. They are *The Division of Labor in Society* (1893), *The Rules of Sociological Method* (1895), *Suicide* (1897), the first sociological research based on an empirical method, and *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life* (1912), his major work. We will begin with *The Rules of Sociological Method*, which contains the theory of social facts, Durkheim's best-known contribution to sociology. It is not the only one, but it is the one that supports all the others. Whether dealing with the division of social labor, suicide, or religious life, Durkheim starts from and returns to the theory of social facts.

We will begin with the definition proposed by Durkheim, according to which social facts are: "Ways of acting, thinking, and feeling which possess the

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remarkable property of existing outside the consciousness of the individual. Not only are these types of behavior and thinking external to the individual, but they are endued with a compelling and coercive power by virtue of which, whether he wishes it or not, they impose themselves upon him" (Durkheim [1895] 2013, 20).

Social facts include language, fashion, religion, morals, law, and education. They are external because they exist independently of the will of individuals, and they are coercive because they impose themselves in an overbearing way from the outside. The language we speak existed before we came into the world and will continue to exist even when we pass away. According to the theory of social facts, language, like religion, is not in individuals but in society. It is the society that imposes mental and behavioral patterns on individuals to interact with one another. Education is the example of a social fact on which Durkheim insists most to exemplify his thought, summarized in the sentence: "I did not seek the education I received" (Durkheim [1895] 2013, 87). Society dictates a way of life that children would never achieve on their own. Children are forced to eat and sleep at set times. Their will is forcibly bent if they cry and refuse to go to school. These constraints stop being an affliction only when they become a habit. The decorum, obedience, punctuality, language, and religion are not in the child but around him. It is not the will that determines social facts; it is social facts that determine the will. Social facts are independent of our will. Whenever we try to get the upper hand on them, they react to impose themselves on us like molds into which we are forced to cast our actions. Individuals do not feel the pressure of society when they identify with it and obey its rules. However, the coercive and external power of social facts will become evident to them if they try to rebel. When violated, the norms react through sanctions, which can be positive or negative. The former are rewards to encourage certain conduct, and the latter are punishments to discourage it.

Sanctions are central to Durkheim's theory, holding society together and making visible the hidden power of social facts. It is, in fact, the severity of the sanction that reveals the strength of a particular social fact, which can be, for example, a religious sentiment. Suppose a sanction is severe and is applied promptly and inflexibly. In that case, it means that a social fact, alive and pulsating in the collective consciousness, is rebelling against its violation and affirms its domination by force. According to Durkheim, society wants conformity and pushes individuals to be afraid of being different because it wants them all to be the same or, in any case, very similar. Social facts can be material or nonmaterial, like norms and values.

The shape of houses is also a social fact with an obligatory character. It is the precipitate of a tradition handed down from generation to generation. The homes we live in and their furnishings are nothing more than how society builds houses based on the habits of previous generations. Buildings are not mere physical artifacts. Values, rules, norms, and interpersonal relationships mediate their architectural forms. Houses are cultural products (Mazumdar and Mazumdar 1997).

Social fact theory also applies to the world of emotions. Enthusiasm, indignation, or pity, which pervades individuals in collective gatherings, comes to each participant from outside and involves them. When the gathering ends and the emotional impetus wears off, some even get ashamed thinking back to their indulging in

the crowd. As soon as the assembly is dissolved, the social influences cease to act on us, and we find ourselves alone with ourselves; the emotions through which we have passed produce the effect of something foreign, like an "alien phenomenon" in which we no longer recognize ourselves. We realize then that we have suffered much more than created emotions. It even happens that certain emotions horrify us, as they are so contrary to our nature.

For this reason, usually, completely harmless individuals get involved in atrocious actions as soon as they are gathered in a crowd. The overwhelming emotion bursting in an assembly was not in the participants before they came together. It is a group emotional state which arises at that moment. Individuals are dominated by social facts, to which they bow, and each is carried away by all. This phenomenon does not only concern the uncultivated masses, easy prey of emotionality. Opinion movements in the religious, literary, and artistic fields also involve cultured and refined élites, prisoners of their intellectual fashions. Conformism is found in all social strata.

With the theory of social facts, Durkheim wanted to achieve two primary goals. The first is to equip sociology with a specific object of study, different from philosophy and psychology, of which sociology is not a corollary. The second is to unite sociologists around a standard method based on a shared way of thinking and studying society.

The Rules of Sociological Method

The first rule of the sociological method is to consider social facts "as things" so that it is possible to study them empirically: "Social phenomena are things and should be treated as such" (Durkheim [1895] 2013, 36). Treating social phenomena as things is the starting point of any scientific analysis.

According to Durkheim, social facts have the characteristics of something observable from the outside. The law is in the codes; the fashions are in the costumes; the tastes are in the artistic works; the actions are contained in the statistics; the conceptions of the world are found in the monuments of history.

Material social facts, such as architectural styles, are directly observable.

The most difficult problems arise with intangible social facts.

Our ideas on solidarity, justice, freedom, and friendship are mental representations that make social life entirely. Representations are like air: They surround us, but they are nonmaterial and, therefore, do not show themselves to our eyes with the same immediacy as material social facts. Sociologists do not observe religious faith but the phenomenal reality that expresses it, that is, a behavior from which it can be deduced. Faith in God is a content of the mind, which becomes observable if it becomes visible through a speech or an action, such as a sermon or a religious ceremony. Sociologists can observe only those contents of the mind that manifest themselves externally. For this reason, they spend most of their time studying mental representations. Intangible social facts must be inferred from observation. If

feelings cannot be observed directly, they must be observed indirectly. Sociologists can never give up observation, without which no sociology exists.

The second rule of the sociological method states that the sociologist must discard all preconceptions or ideas based on common sense. Sociologists must be wary of the ideas they share with the man in the street. When sociologists realize that they agree with the masses, they must worry. Sociologists must free themselves from the false evidence that dominates the spirit of the masses and exercise rigorous control over their emotions so as not to become their victims. The passion of the character jeopardizes the objectivity of the investigation. Durkheim explains that scholars often fall in love with their ideas and hate being contradicted. Sociologists must be different from the masses, easy prey to passions and collective identifications, and not give in to conformism. Discarding reservations means being wary of the beliefs of the common people and their own. Scholars also have their own "spiritual guides" due to inadequate scientific education. Keeping feelings in check during the sociological investigation deserves the utmost attention. What makes liberation from false evidence particularly difficult in sociology is the feeling that often appears. We are much more passionate about our political or religious beliefs and our moral practices than we are about the things of the physical world. This passionate character relates to how we conceive and explain social facts. Our ideas are as dear to us as their object and thus acquire such an authority to be refractory to any contradiction. Any conflicting opinion is considered an enemy. For example, if a statement clashes with the idea of patriotism and individual dignity, it is denied, whatever the evidence on which it rests. It cannot be admitted that it is true. It is, therefore, opposed to rejection: "Feeling is an object for scientific study, not the criterion of scientific truth" (Durkheim [1895] 2013, 39).

At this point, we must ask ourselves how the individual can discard preconceptions rooted in collective representations: If everything depends on society, if society dominates the individual, if society implants thoughts and emotions in its members, how can a sociologist discard reservation and develop independent thinking concerning what society requires them to think? Durkheim responds by extolling the role of originality since there is an area of psychic life which—whatever the degree of development of the collective type—varies from man to man and belongs individually to each of them, that formed by representations, feelings, and from the tendencies that refer to the organism and the states of the organism: "It is the world of internal and external sensations and the movements which are directly linked to them" (Durkheim 1933, 198). This first basis of all individuality is inalienable and does not depend on the social state. And so, thanks to this area of psychic life that society cannot conquer, men have the faculty to assume a critical attitude toward tradition and question commonplaces, discarding reservations. Society penetrates all men with its prejudices, but some of them, the sociologists who refer to the theory of social fact, can recognize and discard them. Putting the discourse in these terms, science becomes an enterprise that can only be carried out by a few chosen minds endowed with unusual originality, which leads to a decidedly elitist conception of sociology.

After having discarded the reservations, the sociologist must identify the social fact they intend to study and define it in a precise and circumscribed way. Since observation is the foundation of sociology, definitions must indicate the external properties of things so that they can be observed. The first task of the sociologist must therefore be to define the things in question so that we know precisely what the question is on the table. This is the first and most indispensable condition of any proof of verification. Indeed, a theory can only be tested when the facts it deals with are clear to the participants in the discussion.

However, developing good definitions is not easy due to the habit of judging the world from our point of view. The subjective criterion leads to serious distortions, which produce bad definitions. For example, those who think that primitive peoples do not have morality because they follow practices considered to be execrable, such as human sacrifices, make the mistake of defining moral phenomena on the basis of their own moral conscience. Durkheim proposes an objective criterion and explains that a social fact must have the outward sign of morality to be considered moral, which is the blame of public opinion. If a people practice human sacrifice and, at the same time, strike the wicked, then it certainly has a moral. No institution, practice, or moral maxim is ever good or bad. What is normal for the savage is not normal for civilized man. Good and evil are concepts related to time and place. It follows that the crime must be defined based on the sentence. This does not mean that the punishment makes the crime, but since thought can only reach things externally, it is through the punishment that the crime becomes manifest. Sociologists must start from the penalty to return to the crime, just as they must start from the monument to understand the artist's world conception. More clearly, when a man is arrested or tortured by a public authority, be it the state or the tribal chief, the sociologist can weigh the strength of values based on the emotional reaction of the community: "Crime shocks sentiments, which for a given social system, are found in all healthy consciences" (Durkheim [1893] 1933, 73).

What leaps to the eye is the sanction, from which the sociologist deduces collective morality. Indeed, a value may lose its importance or be supplanted by rival values, and then the penalty becomes ever lighter and rarer until it disappears. Suppose society stops affecting a particular behavior after having repressed it for a long time. In that case, it means that a value, or a system of values, has become extinct since the punishment of a crime is the social reaction caused by offended sentiments.

The Internalization of Moral Norms

Over time, Durkheim realized that he had to give due importance to internalizing the norms to balance the radical nature of his objectivist approach based on the power of sanctions. No society could last long by relying solely on external coercion. Tradition needs to be accepted willingly by individuals. The company is stable when its members act on its behalf with good spirits. External control must be accompanied by internal control, which gives rise to the "moral obligation" or

policeman inside our head that prevents us from stealing, even when we are sure we are not being watched. We are "normal" when society is integrated into our personality system.

But what is the criterion for distinguishing normal phenomena from pathological ones?

Durkheim replies that the criterion is generality. Normal social facts are facts common to all members of a community or to its great majority. Normal morality is the common morality, which emerges from the average of behaviors. The most widespread social facts are normal social facts. Similarly, the crimes have in common that they are universally frowned upon by members of every society. As is evident, the criterion of the distinction between the normal and the pathological is relative. Being normal means being like everyone else. This implies that what is considered pathological in one society may be normal in another. To exemplify his thought on the normal and the pathological, Durkheim cites the death sentence against Socrates (399), who was judged a criminal in the Athens of his time but is considered one of the greatest masters of humanity in our time. Accused of morally corrupting young people, Socrates was killed by a society in which new world views were slowly supplanting traditional values. Socrates could not have developed his teachings if Athenian society had exercised complete and absolute control over the thoughts of all its citizens. In order for philosophers to be ahead of their time, their thinking must be able to escape the moral imperatives of society or at least a part of it. This space of freedom can be filled by both philosophers and criminals. Thus, Durkheim affirms that crime is integral to a healthy society and contributes to public health. The crime must only be considered a pathological fact when it reaches an exaggerated rate. In contained forms, however, it performs two positive functions. The first is to strengthen common morality: The indignation of society in the face of crime reinvigorates the collective conscience. The second is to leave a space of freedom for the spread of new lifestyles. If society cannot control the intentions of all criminals, then it cannot control the thoughts of all its members either.

The Rules of Sociological Method offers a kind of "praise of crime." Not only does a crime imply that the way to necessary changes remains open, but in a sense, it also prepares these changes directly. Where crime exists, collective sentiments are in the state of malleability necessary to take on a new form. The offense sometimes helps to predetermine the form that collective feelings will take. Often, the crime is merely an anticipation of the morality of the future, a start toward what this morality will become. Socrates was a criminal by Athenian law, and his sentence was perfectly just. However, his crime, the independence of his thought, benefited humanity and his homeland. He served to prepare a morality and a new faith that the Athenians needed at the time. The traditions with which they had lived were no longer in harmony with their conditions of existence. The case of Socrates is not isolated. It reproduces periodically in history. The freedom of thought we enjoy could never have been proclaimed if the rules banning it had not been violated before they were solemnly repealed.

Box 5.1 The Moral Authority
A central point of Durkheim's thought is that man, abandoned to himself, is unable to self-regulate and, for this reason, always needs an external moral authority to help him orient himself. Only in this way can individuals find a "meaning," a place in the world, and avoid drifting. When society is no longer able to bind its members to itself, men are no longer able to understand the values for which it is worth living and enduring the pains of life, plunging into acute psychological suffering, which, as we will see later, provides a push to suicide. The meaning of life is not inscribed in our genetic code. It is the society that gives meaning to the lives of its members by binding them to themselves.

Mechanical Solidarity and Organic Solidarity

Durkheim thought that the lack of social cohesion was bad for any society and believed that the sociologist should indicate the remedies to cure it by clarifying, first of all, the importance of morality, that is, of a shared system of values, since "morality is the least indispensable, the strictly necessary, the daily bread without which society cannot exist" (Durkheim [1893] 1933, 51).

In *The Division of Labor in Society*, Durkheim explains that social cohesion depends on solidarity, which comes in two different forms: Mechanical and organic solidarity.

Mechanical solidarity is typical of simple societies, characterized by a low level of functional specialization. Since the division of labor in society is underdeveloped, individuals perform the same functions and can "mechanically" identify with each other. A natural disaster affects everyone equally because they all perform similar functions. Mechanical solidarity is instinctive and immediate solidarity: "As everybody is related to things in the same way, they affect all consciences in the same way. The whole tribe, if it is not too widely extended, enjoys or suffers the same advantages or inconveniences from the sun, rain, heat, or cold, from this river, or that source, etc." (Durkheim [1893] 1933, 287). The fact that the conditions of life are the same for everyone creates a solid moral cohesion and a single way of conceiving the world, enclosed in religion. The similarity of functions is also the cause of the identity of opinions. In simple societies, there is only one religion, and an impious act hurts everyone with the same intensity: Tradition has an absolute weight, and the collective conscience crushes the individual conscience. Repressive law corresponds to societies based on mechanical solidarity: Those who violate collective norms suffer exemplary physical punishment because they disturb the morality of all members. The reaction is, therefore, exorbitant because hearts beat in unison, and everyone invokes atonement, creating enormous punitive impetus.

If mechanical solidarity originates from the similarity of functions, organic solidarity arises from their difference, which increases with the process of social differentiation. In complex societies, individuals are in solidarity with each other because they perform different functions. Organic solidarity is based on a

relationship of mutual dependence. Each one, specializing in only one function, must rely on those who perform different functions to survive. In Durkheim's perspective, explaining the transition from mechanical solidarity to organic solidarity means explaining the birth of the division of labor, which has attributed many different functions to individuals.

To understand Durkheim's thinking concerning the division of labor in society, it is necessary to confront it with Adam Smith.

According to Smith's thesis, the division of labor was born from a rational and thoughtful calculation: The division of labor took hold when the one who built the bows and arrows realized it was advantageous to exchange them with the sheep. The first men found it convenient to engage in a single business and obtain the other products they needed by the exchange. They calculated that specializing in a single function would improve their quantity, quality, and speed performance. A faster production increases the time to devote oneself to non-productive activities, such as sleep, housekeeping, and meditation, from which creative impulses can arise to improve the organization of life. The division of labor determines a proportional increase in the productive capacity of labor in every profession. It seems to Smith that the separation of different trades and occupations arose precisely due to this advantage (Smith 1976, 14). Based on this explanation, the division of labor was born from reasoning driven by the search for profit. The division of labor would therefore have exclusively individual and psychological causes. According to this thesis, the need for happiness would urge a man to specialize more and more. Durkheim denies that the desire to become happier was the "trigger" of the division of labor. According to him, primitive man could not have imagined that the division of labor would trigger the process from which complex societies would be born. Before the work can be divided, society must already be formed. It is not the division of labor that creates society; it is the society that creates the division of labor. Without considering that the division of labor has not increased happiness, as demonstrated by the phenomenon of "sad suicide" or "true suicide" (Durkheim [1893] 1933, 247), a kind of suicide that was born and developed with the civilization process. There is, therefore, no relationship between the variations in happiness and the progress of the division of labor: "Mental disease keep pace with civilization, nor that they rage in cities rather than in the country, and in large cities more than in small ones" (Durkheim [1893] 1933, 273). The cause that explains the labor division's progress must be sought in a series of variations in the social environment, not in the pursuit of individual happiness.

But what would be the change in the social environment that created the conditions for the division of labor?

This epochal change is the end of the "segmentary societies" characterized by a "cellular system" that confines its members in narrow spaces without contact with the outside world. The cells are "occluded segments": Small groups with no contact. To explain the division of labor, we must, therefore, reconstruct the factors that allowed the opening of the cells since: "The division of labor can exist only to the extent that the segmental structure has ceased to exist" (Durkheim [1893] 1933, 256).

The Division of Labor and the Struggle for Life

The disappearance of the segmental structure occurs thanks to many individuals coming into contact for the first time. Driven by kinship, consanguinity, the cult of ancestors, and love for a territory, men give life to the first forms of social aggregation. Mechanical and impulsive forces initiate such an agglomeration process. Durkheim calls this phenomenon of rapprochement and active trade between individuals moral or dynamic density, with which he indicates that individuals, in addition to trading, live a life in common: The greater the moral or dynamic density, the greater the division of labor can be.

The material density, conversely, indicates the volume of individuals on a given surface and the development of communication and transit routes.

Material and moral density grow together, and it is useless to establish which precedes the other. The only sure thing is that they are inseparable. However, simply increasing the number of inhabitants per area unit is not enough to initiate the division of labor. Many separate cells do not cause division of labor on a large scale. It is not enough that there are many individuals; they must also interact. On the other hand, a small number of individuals who interact intensely can develop a complex and productive organization.

The heart of Durkheim's thought is contained in this passage, based on the two fundamental concepts of "moral density" (number of interactions) and "material density" (number of individuals):

> Even an immense aggregate of clans is below the smallest organized society, since the latter has run through stages of evolution within which the other has remained. In the same way, if the number of social units has influence on the division of labor, it is not through itself and necessarily, but it is because the number of social relations generally increases with that of individuals. But, for this result to be attained, it is not enough that society take in a great many people, but they must be, in addition, intimately enough in contact to act and react on one another. If they are, on the contrary, separated by opaque milieux, they can only be bound by rare and weak relations, and it is as if they had small populations. The increase of social volume does not, then, always accelerate the advances of the division of labor, but only when the mass is contracted at the same time and to the same extent. Consequently, it is only an additional factor, but when it is joined to the first, it amplifies its effects by action peculiar to it, and therefore is to be distinguished from that.
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> We can then formulate the following propositions: *The division of labor varies in direct ratio with the volume and density of societies, and, if it progresses in a continuous manner in the course of social development, it is because societies become regularly denser and generally more voluminous*. (Durkheim [1893] 1933, 261–262)

A mass of individuals interacting on the same territory does not automatically cause the division of labor: Agglomeration does not imply cooperation. So many people who congregate could also spark a war between them.

Why do they choose to cooperate?

Drawing on Charles Darwin's studies, Durkheim argues that the division of labor develops to mitigate the struggle for life. As more and more peasants use the same land for a living, resources are scarce, and tensions rise. Those who carry out the

same activity compete and try to supplant each other. At this point, the division of labor becomes necessary to reduce the disruptive effects of the struggle for life. Darwin—Durkheim explains—rightly observed that the struggle is more intense among analogous organisms. They become rivals precisely because they have exactly the same needs and goals. Peaceful coexistence between them is possible if resources are abundant for both. But what happens if analogous organisms increase and resources become scarce? War breaks out, and its intensity increases as resources decrease. However, the situation becomes less explosive if individuals living in the same area eat different foods and have different lifestyles. In this case, resources that are important to some will be worthless to others, and the opportunities for conflict in the community will diminish.

The division of labor allows men not to get in the way of each other. The soldier aspires to military glory, while the priest aspires to moral authority. The division of labor mitigates the struggle for existence even within the same professional category. Just as the ophthalmologist does not compete with the doctor treating mental illness, the cobbler does not harm the hatter, and the physic does not harm the chemist. The more men perform the same functions and aspire to the same resources, the more they try to supplant each other.

Furthermore, the division of labor makes natural selection less ruthless, allowing the weakest to survive. In a society that performs many functions and has a wide range of needs, even the most fragile individuals can render a service of some social utility. For example, someone with a frail and infirm body can make themselves useful with the strength of the mind and avoid being eliminated.

In primitive populations, where the division of labor does not exist or has just developed, the enemy is killed because no one would know what function to assign them. In more developed societies, however, prisoners are used as slaves. The specialization of functions is only one of the ways in which communities can mitigate the struggle for life. In countries where existence is made too difficult by the extreme density of the population, the inhabitants can emigrate, integrate, colonize other lands, resign themselves to a miserable existence, or eliminate the weakest by pushing them to suicide.

Why, Durkheim wonders, have some societies taken the path of the division of labor?

The division of labor was born where the collective conscience had allowed individuals a certain margin of freedom. For men to stand out, society must morally accept specialization. If a society does not tolerate the differentiation of its members, the division of labor cannot develop because common morality would adopt severe punishments against transgressors. As long as the group is an all-encompassing force, no individual variation can exist. The division of labor is possible where the individual has already begun to move more freely in their social environment. Durkheim cites the example of the "Zadruga," the ancient rural community of Slavs linked by kinship ties. Even when the members of the Zadruga become too numerous and misery spreads, none leave the community to seek their fortune elsewhere, specializing in a profession such as a merchant or a sailor. As the collective conscience is very strong, individual variations are difficult. The Zadruga stay together, even if food is scarce. At this point, Durkheim introduces a very important new factor for understanding the birth of civilizations, that is, the imagination.

The Role of Imagination in the Development of Civilization

Men living in increasingly large territories learned to feel connected to each other through their imagination. It is the imagination that allows members of a large political community to feel like "brothers," even if they will never know each other personally. The collective conscience, forced to rise above all particular differences, became more abstract. Even the way of imagining the deities was affected by this cognitive process. Early human communities had no gods, only animals or sacred objects for themselves. Then, the religious forces detach themselves from the objects, and the concept of spirit is born. God becomes a transcendent force, and with Christianity, he definitively comes out of space to help the whole of humanity and not just the tribe members. The kingdom of God is no longer of this world, and the dissociation between nature and divinity takes on a complete and antagonistic character. The rules of morality and law are also universalized. The notion of man supplants that of a Roman citizen. The collective conscience fades and leaves more freedom to individual variations. This process of abstraction leaves men a wider margin of interpretation of the rules and greater freedom of judgment. Critical reflection increases and invests articles of faith that were once indisputable. In cities, "collective surveillance" or "social control" is weaker, and people are freer to indulge their inclinations.

Big cities are the "uncontested homes of progress" (Durkheim [1893] 1933, 296) where ideas, fashions, customs, and new needs challenging the power of tradition develop. The restitutive law corresponds to complex societies. The crime is mostly a matter between the victim and the perpetrator, who is asked to repair the damage. In complex societies, the common morality is less strong than in simple societies, and the penalties are less severe.

In this passage, Durkheim compares the repressive law of simple societies with the restitutive law of complex societies:

> In the first place, the punishment consists of a passionate reaction. This character is all the more evident the less civilized societies are. Primitive peoples, in fact, punish in order to punish, they make the guilty suffer only to make him suffer and without expecting any profit from the sufferings they impose on him. Proof of this is the fact that they seek neither to strike rightly nor to strike usefully, but only to strike. […]. When the punishment is applied only to persons, it often extends well beyond the guilty, reaching even innocent people, such as wives, children, neighbors and so on. This happens because the passion—which is the soul of the punishment—does not stop until it is exhausted, and therefore, if it still has strength left after destroying the one who aroused it most immediately, it continues to expand. Entirely mechanically. But today—it is said—the nature of the punishment has changed; society does not punish to take revenge, but to defend itself. The pain he inflicts is—in his hands—only a methodical instrument of protection. It punishes not because the punishment in itself offers it some satisfaction, but because the fear of punishment paralyzes bad will. Not anger, but foresight determines repression after due consideration. (Durkheim 1933, 85–86)

I will summarize Durkheim's thought on the birth of civilization like this: By agglomerating themselves, men divide the work and cooperate instead of fighting

for the same resources. The division of labor gives rise to ever-larger communities in which individuals bond with each other through the power of imagination. In this way, Durkheim explains how it is possible to create an emotional bond between people who do not know each other, anticipating Benedict Anderson's explanation of nationalism, according to which the nation is "an imagined political community" (Anderson 2016, 6). Its inhabitants are millions, and they will never know each other, yet the image of being a community lives on in their minds.

Since his first work, Durkheim supported radical anti-reductionism: Every social fact must be explained by another social fact, not economics or psychology. Another example of Durkheim's anti-reductionism concerns his explanation of the birth of philosophy. Philosophy indeed caused the regress of religious beliefs. However, such a regression would not have occurred if religious beliefs had not already been undermined by something else at an earlier time. Philosophy would not have been born if religion, representing the most eminent form of collective conscience, had not lost some prestige. In summary, first, religion weakened, and then philosophy was able to develop.

This methodological principle is also rigorously applied in Durkheim's studies on suicide that we are about to study.

Box 5.2 The Pedagogical Role of Science

The scientific relativism of the theory of social facts finds a strong counterweight in the educational role that Durkheim assigned to sociology. According to him, sociology would be useless if its only function were to explain how causes produce effects. If sociology were stripped of all practical utility, no one would find it advantageous to cultivate it. Why should we spend so much time on sociology—Durkheim wondered—if we can't use it to improve our daily lives? Durkheim was, at the same time, an educator and a scientist. At the beginning of his career, Durkheim had not yet cleared his path and was divided between two separate fields of knowledge: Pure science, on the one hand, and politics, on the other. Sociology, understood as a science at the service of society, allowed him to find the right synthesis, combining the love of knowledge with the passion for action (Halbwachs 2018, 35).

The Definition of Suicide

The theme of social cohesion is also central in the research on suicide, with which Durkheim tried to establish sociology on an empirical basis.

Durkheim states that the authentic drive for self-suppression comes from society, not the person's inner world. His words appear like an intellectual manifesto: "The social rate of suicides can only be explained sociologically. It is the moral constitution of society that determines at any moment the number of voluntary deaths" (Durkheim [1897] 2006, 331). Every nation has a collective force, or a certain

amount of energy, that drives individuals to commit suicide. The fact that it is the individual who commits suicide should not deceive the sociologist since they commit suicide under the pressure of a specific type of society. The suicide of the individual is the external manifestation of the internal characteristics of a certain type of society. Individuals commit suicide both when they are too integrated into society and when they are too little. Men detached from society are liable to kill themselves as easily as when they are too integrated into it. That expresses well the Durkheimian idea, according to which excesses are always harmful.

In Durkheim's definition, suicide consists of any death directly or indirectly resulting from a positive or negative act performed by the victim aware of producing this result. Whoever kills themselves with a weapon is suicidal, like the iconoclast who challenges religious authority in search of martyrdom. Even if the martyr's death has an indirect cause, since the executioner deprives them of life, it must still be considered suicide because it is wanted and desired. However, someone who dies in a reckless action without wishing for death is not suicidal. In this case, Durkheim speaks of "embryonic suicide," not a "complete and fully realized" suicide (Durkheim [1897] 2006, 21).

Once it is clear what suicide is, Durkheim turns his criticisms to psychological explanations, so rooted in common thought that they even influence judicial investigations, which limit themselves to noting individual motives. However, the motivation the suicides give to their farewell letter is not the determining cause of their gesture. Being afflicted by debts or losing a loved one or a job is only an apparent cause. Accidents in private life seem to be the immediate inspirers of suicide and are considered the determining conditions. In reality, they are only incidental causes. If the individual gives in at the slightest bump of circumstances, it means that the state of society has made him easy prey for suicide. After criticizing the psychological explanations, Durkheim refutes the explanations based on extra-social factors, such as the individual's organic constitution or the physical environment's nature. Suicide is a social fact that must be explained with another social fact. After developing similar definitional and methodological clarifications, Durkheim identifies four main types of suicide: anomic, egoistical, altruistic, and fatalistic.

Anomic and egoistic suicide are caused by poor integration and regulation: Society can no longer bind individuals to themselves in both cases. Altruistic and fatalistic suicide, on the other hand, occur when the individual is too integrated and regulated by society.

The central problem is always the relationship between the individual and society. For this reason, Durkheim used the statistics of his time to study suicide occurring in four different types of society: Religious, political, family, and military society.

Egoistical Suicide

Starting from the analysis of religious society, Durkheim's first observation is that the suicide rate in Protestant societies is higher than in Catholic ones. Looking at the map of suicides in Europe, one can see at first glance how suicide is underdeveloped in purely Catholic countries such as Spain, Portugal, and Italy, while it reaches its maximum in Protestant countries, Prussia, Saxony, and Denmark.

Durkheim explains that Protestants kill themselves more than Catholics because of their religious individualism. While Protestantism allows the believer to establish a dialogue with God without intermediaries, Catholicism submits individuals to the community, enveloping them in a dense network of social relations within a hierarchical organization that leaves no doubts about lawful and legitimate behaviors. The Catholic must submit to an external and higher authority, the priest, guardian of tradition. The integrative force of Catholicism is expressed visually from the pulpit: On the one hand, the pastor, who guides from above; on the other hand, the flock, which follows from below. When life's traumas shake Protestants, their individualism makes it difficult to find the necessary holds within themselves. On the other hand, the Catholics can count on an integrated community, which protects them from egoistic suicide.

While Protestantism is a swarm of sects of all kinds, the Catholic Church is characterized by its indivisible unity. The essential difference between Catholicism and Protestantism is that the second admits free examination more than the first. Catholics receive their faith ready-made without examination. They cannot subject it to historical verification, not being allowed to read the original texts on which religious dogmas rely. They are ruled by an authoritarian, hierarchical system, organized with marvelous art to keep the tradition unchanged, and all that may be variation is a horror in Catholic thought.

On the other hand, Protestants are the primary authors of their faith. They have direct access to the Bible without being subjected to any imposition from above. The very structure of the Reformed faith increases religious individualism. Except for England, the Protestant clergy is not hierarchical in any place, and the priests, like the ordinary believers, rely only on themselves and their conscience.

Statistics also reveal that Jews commit suicide less than Catholics, despite the Bible not containing any provisions prohibiting men from killing themselves. In this case, it is the persecution of Jews that makes the difference. To protect themselves from the blows of the persecutors, Jews create communities based on strong internal solidarity, which integrate their members even more intensely than the Catholic Church. In addition to the persecutions, Durkheim also considers the characteristics of Judaism, which aims to control every aspect of the life of the adepts. Jews, full of mandatory practices and beliefs removed from free individual examination, are less exposed to the risk of existential bewilderment typical of societies founded on religious individualism. The fact that believers always have to rely on religious authorities to interpret dogmas makes it necessary to ordain many priests, who can better organize believers into a compact community. Priests are the controllers of individual consciences. The greater the number of dogmas and precepts removed from

the interpretation of individual consciences, the more the religious authorities are required to explain their meaning; on the other hand, the more numerous these religious authorities are, the more closely they frame the individuals and the better they contain them.

A strongly hierarchical Church, with solid internal unity and a developed traditionalism, restrains individuals' creative impulses. Conversely, an individualistic society produces the opposite effects. Since men cannot find a guide to orient themselves in their inner life, they must search for an external authority that takes the place of tradition. Science plays the role of religious substitute. As tradition weakens, the need for education grows. That is why philosophy advances as soon as religion retreats. We must be careful not to confuse cause with effect: Religion does not retreat because philosophy is born; it is the philosophy that can arise because religion has moved back. Not surprisingly, Protestants are more individualistic and even more educated than Catholics. Since the authority of tradition is weaker among them, the need for education is stronger. Tradition holds back egoistic suicides, but it also holds back the need for education and the development of science. Similarly, egoistic suicide is exceptionally frequent in the more educated strata of society, where intellectual life is more flourishing, and the love for science is more intense. From 1826 to 1880, the largest number of suicides in France came from the liberal professions group, which recorded 550 suicides for every million subjects, while suicides among servants were only 290. As for women, they are less educated than men, compared to whom commit suicide less. Many of Durkheim's claims about women today would no longer be shared in countries where the emancipation of women has been most intense. However, it is useful to read them because they clarify Durkheim's thinking on the relationship between the level of education and the tendency to suicide. Being essentially traditionalists, women regulate their conduct on established beliefs and do not have great intellectual needs. In Italy, between 1878 and 1879, 4808 out of 10,000 married men could not sign the marriage contract. In the same time period, there were 7029 out of 10,000 married women who could not.

The tendency to suicide is aggravated in cultured circles due to the weakening of traditional beliefs and the strengthening of moral individualism. So how can we explain that Jews commit few suicides despite being particularly cultured? Durkheim explains this apparent exception with the fact that the Jews do not study to replace tradition with philosophical beliefs but to defend themselves from the prejudices of others. They use education not to defeat their own prejudices but to combat those of others more effectively. Jews study hard and commit few suicides because the growth in their education level does not supplant the power of tradition. The level of education goes up, but social solidarity doesn't go down.

As for the relationship between suicides and family society, Durkheim finds that celibates commit suicide more than married couples. The dominant idea is that celibates have less reason to commit suicide than married couples because family problems afflict them less. This a priori reasoning is false. Celibates bear the shocks of life much less than married couples. The family company has strong integrative power. Duties and responsibilities fill the life of spouses. The consequence is that

the married state reduces the danger of suicide by about half compared to celibacy. Reflecting on the relationship between suicides and family society, Durkheim introduces an important distinction between two types of different family associations. The first association is represented by the two spouses (marital group), and the second by the two spouses plus children (family group). It is the family group that performs the prophylactic function against selfish suicide.

In France, married women without children kill themselves much more than single women of the same age. This means that the marital group alone is not decisive against suicide. However, married women with children, i.e., women with a family group, kill themselves less than single women. Suicide diminishes with the burdens of life. Children are a source of concern, but also of inexhaustible commitments that bind parents to family, so much so that widowers with children commit suicide less than married couples without children. The family, Durkheim writes, provides strong incentives to survive, and children bind widowers to life. The death of a spouse destroys the marital group but keeps the family group alive. Religious and family societies place a thousand restraints on those who think of shirking their duties with death. The analysis of egoistical suicide is full of pedagogical invitations to fear the detrimental effects of egoism. The reason is clear: A society is highly integrated when individuals are at its service and cannot dispose of themselves at will. In conclusion: "Suicide rates vary inversely with the degree of integration of the social groups to which the individual belongs" (Durkheim [1897] 2006, 224).

Durkheim clearly understood the difference between individualism and egoism. However, he believed it was impossible to spread the former without propagating the latter. It is not individualism in itself but egoistic individualism that leads to suicide. As difficult as it is, individualism can unite people and create bonds of solidarity. However, egoistical individualism can only remove them, making them more alone and more fragile in the face of life's traumas. Of the four types of suicide, Durkheim believed that egoistical suicide was the most prevalent in modern societies.

Altruistic Suicide

Altruistic suicide prevails in primitive communities, where egoistic suicide is almost absent. Societies founded on strong collective surveillance are integrated and subject individuals to common morality through a powerful sanctions system.

Among the examples of altruistic suicide, Durkheim cites the elders of the ancient warrior communities, who took their own lives so as not to weigh on the community, but also the young Hindu widows, who killed themselves in order not to survive the death of their husbands. In 1817, in the province of Bengal alone, 706 widows committed suicide; in 1821, there were 2366 suicidal widows throughout India. Among the Heruli, the Thracians, the Spanish Celts, and the Goths, the suicide of the elderly was a very widespread custom. At the borders of the Visigothic lands, there was a high pinnacle called The Rock of the Forefathers, from which the elderly threw themselves when they realized that their social utility had diminished

to the point of becoming a burden to the community. The Danish warriors considered it a shame to die in bed and preferred suicide to such ignominy. A dead body of old age or disease would have dirtied even the fire to incinerate it. In Gaul, the funerals of chiefs were bloody hecatombs in which favorite slaves and servants were burned alive. Among the Ashantis, the king's death required officers to take their own lives.

Altruistic suicide can fall into one of the following three categories: (a) Suicides of men on the threshold of old age or suffering from disease; (b) suicides of women for the death of their husbands; (c) suicides of acolytes or servants on the death of their leaders.

In egoistical suicide, individuals are too distant and divided; in altruistic suicide, they are too close and cohesive. Egoistical suicide is a right; altruistic suicide is a duty. The elder of the warrior communities commits suicide not because they have lost their moral obligations toward society but because they have too many. Durkheim again uses the concept of "collective surveillance" and explains that altruistic suicide would be unthinkable without the control that society exercises over the individual through sanctions. The elders of primitive communities who refused to commit suicide were struck by contempt for their egoism and the threat of terrible punishment in the afterlife for their lack of courage.

Altruistic suicide can be optional, obligatory, or acute. It is optional when the apparent and immediate motive is futile; "obligatory" when it is imposed by society; acute as is the case of mystical suicide. An example of an optional altruistic suicide is represented by Celtic warriors who died to prove they were not afraid of flames or waves of the sea or by those Japanese who only opened their bellies to show that they were brave as if it were a game to entertain the public. In both cases, death arises from futile reasons. Obligatory altruistic suicide, on the other hand, is an imposition of public opinion. In egoism, individuals belong only to themselves; in altruism, they belong to others. Christian martyrs also practiced altruistic suicide. While not killing themselves, they sought death. Christian martyrs faced torture because they felt their individuality had no value regarding their religion.

Being small in size, the group can supervise its members at all times to prevent disagreements between them. This "collective supervision" prevents individuals from developing their inclinations and realizing their desires. Unlike egoistical suicide, which results from too much individualization, altruistic suicide is caused by too little individualization. The first is due to a too-disintegrated society that weakly binds the individual to him/herself; the second is due to a too-integrated society that tightly binds the individual to him/herself. In short, altruistic suicide derives from an excess of altruism. In contrast, egoistical suicide derives from "egotism" or the typical state of the individual who only obeys themselves, living a personal life rather than a social one. However, since altruistic suicide has the characteristic of being performed as a duty, Durkheim gives it the name "obligatory altruistic suicide" (Durkheim [1897] 2006, 239).

According to Durkheim, in contemporary societies, where individualism prevails, altruistic suicide cannot spread on a large scale. However, it is mainly present in military society. In all the countries of Europe, the aptitude of military personnel

to commit suicide is much higher than that of the civilian population of the same age. Soldiers believe military honor, or loyalty to the group and the commander, is more important than life. They often face "heroic" suicide, that is to say, the suicide of soldiers who rush to death under the admiring gaze of their comrades. In modern societies, the barracks represent the social organization with the structure closest to simple societies. Like all simple societies, the army is a massive and compact group that prohibits individuals from acting spontaneously. The collective conscience dominates the individual conscience, and critical reasoning is execrated. Soldiers must be ready to sacrifice their life at any time and be educated to respect superiors' orders without criticizing them. The more the soldier is inclined to obey orders they do not understand, the more they are integrated into the military society.

Consulting the statistics, Durkheim finds that non-commissioned officers commit suicide more than officers. This happens because the non-commissioned officer performs a function requiring a strong submission and passivity habit, which slows down individualism. On the other hand, the officer must take the initiative and give orders and is forced to make a critical and creative effort, increasing his/her individuality. The conditions favorable to altruistic suicide are, therefore, less strong in officers than in non-commissioned officers because the former are more aware of the value of life and are less likely to get rid of it.

Durkheim also explains why ordinary soldiers commit suicide less than officers and non-commissioned officers. Common-sense people believe that ordinary soldiers are most likely to commit suicide because they lead a hard and wretched life. Durkheim regards this explanation as superficial. Some professions impose conditions of life that are much harsher than those of the simple soldier. It is not material life that makes the difference, but social life. On the other hand, if ordinary soldiers were driven to suicide by the hardships imposed by barracks life, there would be more suicides among comrades at the beginning of their careers when they are less prepared to endure the new hardships, but the statistics say otherwise.

Non-commissioned officers commit suicide more than private soldiers. Durkheim does not rule out that changing living conditions in the first months of life in barracks may cause some suicides. However, this is not the cause of the general phenomenon, so much so that in Italy, between 1871 and 1875, officers had an annual average of 565 suicides per million, while the troops recorded an average of 230. In Prussia, while private soldiers gave 560 suicides per million, non-commissioned officers show 1140. Non-commissioned officers lead a less wretched life than private soldiers, and yet they commit suicide much more.

According to the common-sense explanation, volunteers should commit suicide less because they have chosen military deprivation freely, yet their tendency to suicide is exceptionally strong. Here is the paradox: They love military society yet commit suicide in large numbers. This happens not because of the repugnance toward their social environment but because of that set of moods, acquired habits, and natural predispositions which form the military spirit: Since the military ethos is necessarily more marked among re-enlisted and officers than among private soldiers, it is natural that the former are more prone to suicide than the latter. The more the military spirit of self-denial and renunciation grows, the greater the tendency to

altruistic suicide. Without altruism, the military spirit would not exist. Military morality is, in many respects, a survival of primitive morality. The moral constitution produced by the career of arms strongly pushes the individual to get rid of life. It is no coincidence that the coefficient of aggravation in all armies is even higher in elite corps, which are also the most identified with the military spirit. Soldiers trained in the most dangerous missions feel they must defend the good name of their country. The characteristic of the altruistic state is that the principle of conduct is outside the individual.

The characteristics of the wider surrounding society also influence the number of suicides within military society. If a strong traditionalism characterizes the whole society, the tendency to altruism in the military society will be particularly high. Traditionalism is, in fact, the enemy of individualism. A very traditionalist society contains an even more traditionalist military society. If, on the other hand, the whole society is dominated by a strong drive toward individualism, the altruism of the military society will be less exasperated. Durkheim's reasoning will become clearer when one considers that soldiers have relationships with friends and relatives, which exacerbate certain tendencies. A soldier who tarnishes the military spirit will have to be ashamed before the civilian population as well as the military. Public opinion and the surrounding society make their weight felt and can moderate or exasperate certain trends in military society. Wearing a uniform, the soldier does not become another man; the effects of the education received, of the existence conducted up to that moment, do not disappear as if by magic. Moreover, they are not so separated from the rest of society that they do not manage to participate in communal life.

The purest form of altruistic suicide is the obligatory one. Optional and heroic altruistic suicide is only a derivative form.

The praise of moderation recurs continuously in the writings of Durkheim, who clarifies that both altruistic and egoistical suicide spring from a virtue carried to excess. Individualism and altruism are virtues only if individuals can curb their destructive potential. Those who attach great value to human personality end up respecting that of others and developing sensitivity to human suffering. Likewise, being ready to sacrifice oneself for others is not reprehensible, and, indeed, it is not a behavior contrary to the interests of society. Excesses represent the problem: "Every kind of suicide is nothing but the exaggerated or deflected form of virtue" (Durkheim [1897] 2006, 261).

Anomic Suicide

Society is a force that regulates individuals. When this force fails, a state of "non-regulation," or anomie, sets in, and individuals begin to drift. The anomie spreads not only in times of economic crisis but also in those of wealth growth. It is not true that life is more easily given up simply because it has become more painful. If voluntary deaths increased due to the harshness of life, they would decrease as comfort spreads. But this does not happen. Suicides increase both when societies get rich and when they become impoverished. In both cases, the disruption of the balance is

caused by the rapidity of the change, which creates disorientation. Economic disasters abruptly push a certain number of individuals into a lower social position than they have occupied for a long time. They have to make many painful sacrifices and learn to contain their desires. The moral universe of man needs time to adapt to changes. In falling down, a person accustomed to a high standard of living must learn to appreciate what they once despised and vice versa. It is a process of inner reconversion and outward readjustment, which implies a painful psychological enterprise. Their moral education must be redone to establish new standards of what is beautiful and what is ugly, what is just and what is unjust, what is a priority and what is secondary.

The sudden growth of a society's wealth and power causes the same adverse effects on many individuals who go from containing desires to suddenly unleashing them. Aspirations and ambitions grow dramatically. The criteria for establishing possible and impossible are no longer clear and shared by all. What are the legitimate demands and hopes? There is no regulation; anomie spreads. Individuals demand everything, and many have the impression of not getting anything because, having lost the sense of limit and measure, they cannot be satisfied.

Even people who suddenly get rich find themselves in the same anomic situation, and the case of Italy confirms this. After the unification, completed with the capture of Rome in 1870, Italy became a great European power and underwent rapid industrial and commercial development. An exceptional increase in suicides accompanied this collective renaissance. Crises, be they happy or somber, disorient men, making them need new points of reference: "Therefore, if industrial or financial crises increase suicides, it is not because they impoverish people, since prosperity crises have the same result, but because they are crisis, that is, "disturbances of the collective order" (Durkheim [1897] 2006, 267). Any break in equilibrium, even generating great comfort and a rise in general vitality, pushes to voluntary death.

Man is distinguished from animals by the ability to desire without limits. Animals have an objective criterion for establishing when their needs are to be considered exhausted or satisfied. In contrast, human needs are social much more than corporal, and each fulfilled desire generates a new desire to satisfy. When the animal is full, it enters a state of rest. Man, on the other hand, enters a state of restlessness. The afflictions of man in modern society do not depend on the shortage of foodstuffs necessary for physical maintenance. Man's desires are a "bottomless abyss" (Durkheim [1897] 2006, 270) that no wealth can fill. Desires are a source of constant suffering. If an authority, an external force, does not intervene to restrain them from the outside, the man falls into a pathological condition, and their life hangs by a thread that can easily break. In order for such a self-destructive process not to trigger, it is necessary to limit the passions. This discourse is about individual desires and collective aspirations, such as the need for justice and equity.

How can men decide for themselves if the work they do is justly paid?

Durkheim answers that it is up to society to establish the hierarchical criterion for distinguishing the most useful and necessary professions from those less so. However, the balance is never definitive because the scale of values changes over time, based on the growth and decrease of collective income. What was right in one

historical era becomes unfair in another. Everything falls apart when the idea of justice is altered by a crisis or a current of thought. Society loses its regulatory force, and individuals question its general organization. All societies need to impose a moral discipline that prevents the spirit of restlessness and discontent from upsetting peace and harmony under the pressure of individual appetites. Durkheim proposes a thought experiment and imagines a society in which all young people, having abolished the principle of patrimonial inheritance, enter adult life with the same amount of material resources. In a short space of time, young people would have to accept the inequalities produced by the diversity of their natural talents. The most intelligent and those most skilled in manual labor would eventually prevail over the mediocre and the powerless. The social order—Durkheim specifies—must not be imposed with violence, which would only accumulate latent tensions ready to explode at the first opportunity. The authority of society must be moral and, as such, it must be based on consent. Obedience should come from respect and not from fear. When society is shaken by a transformation, men are confused, uncertain, and disoriented and feel the meaning of their life slipping away. Their passions are no longer disciplined. What is lawful to do or not to do is no longer possible to know and appetites no longer recognize the limits to be respected.

This explanation—Durkheim points out—is confirmed by the very low suicide rate in poor countries recorded in the statistics. Poverty protects against suicide because it is a brake against anomie. As we have seen, the satisfaction of a need immediately creates a new need, but the poor have fewer resources to trigger the spiral of desires. Since the poor can achieve few or no goals, they do not always want more than they have. Poverty teaches men to contain themselves and accustoms men to severe discipline. On the other hand, wealth makes one intolerant of limitations and tickles the spirit of rebellion, which Durkheim sees as the very source of immorality.

Anomie is dominant in the world of industry and commerce.

Religion, which once moderated the impulses of workers and entrepreneurs, has lost its moral strength, while governmental power, increasingly subservient to the economy, is unable to transform itself into a secular moral authority. Durkheim points the finger at what he calls the "apotheosis of well-being," amplified by the unlimited extension of markets. Once upon a time, the entrepreneur could only sell their products in the immediate vicinity. But now their customers are the whole world, and their greed can no longer be satisfied. Every limitation appears to them as a mortal torture, and, at the slightest reverse, it breaks down and collapses. Being greedily projected forward, the slightest setback seems unbearable. Anyone who launches into an endless pursuit, sooner or later, will feel the uselessness of his race. This is why, in economic catastrophes, suicides are plentiful. Being thrown back is painful when one has no purpose other than continually exceeding the point reached. The business world claims the largest number of victims. On the other hand, the peasant world is more protected from anomic suicide because the lower classes are used to squeezing their desires under the weight of the upper classes. But those who have no one on top of them want to climb higher and higher and find no restraint on their passions. If nothing stops men from desiring, they do not know how to restrain

their passions and torment themselves because physico-chemical forces cannot moderate the painful anxiety of men plunged into the vortex of unlimited desires. There are no physiological mechanisms to rescue them. If it happens that men have traveled the entire circuit of the possible, they dream of the impossible, becoming thirsty for what does not exist. As non-commissioned officers are more prone to suicide than private soldiers, in the same way, entrepreneurs are more affected by anomie than workers. The poorest and most exploited category of industrial society is also the most protected from anomic suicide since subordination to the bosses slows the unleashing of the passions of the workers.

At this point, it is useful to clarify the differences between the three types of suicide.

Egoistical suicide occurs when the individual, completely withdrawn into himself, no longer finds any reason to continue living: Life appears meaningless to them, so they easily detach from it. Altruistic suicide occurs when the reason for living exists but is caught outside of life itself. In this case, the life of the individual, entirely absorbed by the group, makes sense, but in the function of others or the judgment of others. Anomic suicide occurs when the individual falls into recklessness: Destabilized by a constant frenzy, life becomes unbearable. The individual is interested in what society can give him, but he never gets enough and feels unfulfilled. Both egoistical and altruistic suicide depend on how individuals are linked to society. In the first case, the bond is weak, and in the second, it is strong. Anomic suicide, on the other hand, depends on how society disciplines individuals. In egoistical suicide, passions are extinguished, and in anomic suicide, they are exasperated. Egoistical suicide is widespread in the field of intellectual careers and the world of thinking people; anomic suicide, on the other hand, dominates the industrial and commercial fields.

Let us now analyze the way in which family society influences the propensity to commit suicide.

Widowers, the divorced, and the separated are exposed in different ways to the risk of suicide. The widow's crisis creates a new and difficult situation to manage, which exposes people to anomie. The widower kills himself more easily because the thread that binds them to society has weakened too much. The upheaval of existence makes it more fragile and vulnerable. The divorced, on the other hand, commit suicide much more than the separated. Divorcees of both sexes also commit suicide much more than married couples and widowers. Once again, it is the social situation created by the divorce that makes the difference. Marriage represents, in fact, a system of rules that slows the unleashing of individual desires. While divorce ends the marriage, separation keeps it alive, albeit in a more mitigated form. Many divorcees, moving from marital society to sudden freedom, easily slip into that state of disorder, turmoil, and discontent which increases the likelihood of suicide.

Marriage is seen by common sense as a disadvantageous deal for a man who loses his freedom. Durkheim affirms, quite differently, that individual freedom, which man renounces for married society, would have been only a source of suffering and deadly recklessness. Society penetrates individuals and makes them dependent on it. This helps to understand why suicides are rare up to the age of fifteen and

in the elderly at the limit of life. In both cases, the "physical man" prevails over the "social man." In the first case, the boy has not yet been completely socialized, and their dependence on society is, therefore, less pronounced than the adult man immersed in a large network of social affiliations, which creates needs to be satisfied. Those too young have not yet developed that complete dependence on others that allows society to use sanctions to inflict hurt and frustration on its members. The elderly, on the other hand, are abandoned by society or they are the ones who abandon it, perhaps because the pains of the body force them to focus all attention on themselves. Very young and very old individuals are less at risk of society depriving them of what they need. The more elementary the social life, the less dependence on the society to satisfy moral needs. When society envelops the individual completely, it can crush him. If society gives a lot, it can take everything away.

In sum, egoistical suicide results from a lack of cohesion, altruistic suicide from an excess of cohesion, and anomic suicide from lack of regulation, but there is also a fourth type of suicide, to which we are about to dedicate ourselves, fatalistic suicide, caused by an excess of regulation (Poggi 1972, 200).

Fatalistic Suicide

Fatalistic suicide, to which Durkheim devoted only the closing note to chapter V, is opposed to anomic suicide in the same way that egoistic suicide is opposed to altruistic suicide. If a lack of regulation causes anomic suicide, the fatalistic one is caused by an oppressive physical and moral despotic discipline, which violently compresses the individual's passions. Durkheim cites three examples of fatalistic suicide: The suicide of married men who are too young, married women without children, and slaves who have their future wholly closed and cannot hope for a better tomorrow. More recently, sociologists have added the case of concentration camp prisoners. Fatalistic suicide was reevaluated after Durkheim's death (Dohrenwend 1959; Breed 1970; Young 1972; Acevedo 2005).

In addition to fatalistic suicide, Durkheim mentions many others, which can be understood by delving into his book. They are self-absorption suicide, epicurean suicide, choleric suicide, the suicide of the man misunderstood, obsessive suicide, and stoic suicide.

There is a type of egoistic suicide that is caused by falling in love with oneself and is becoming increasingly common in modern times. The individual invests their time in reflecting on themselves and the meaning of their existence until they detach themselves from the world for an intense speculative life, which causes them to have twisted inner reveries. The "melancholy languor" (Durkheim [1897] 2006, 308) that invades their life reduces any stimulus to action. Public functions, and even domestic duties, arouse their detachment and indifference. Locked up in themselves, preoccupied only with observing and analyzing themselves, inner reflection becomes their only concern, as happens to the character of Raphaël in the novel of the same name by Alphonse de Lamartine. Since Durkheim does not give it a specific name, I will name it "self-absorption suicide."

Durkheim explains that man really acts only by mixing with others. To reflect on people, he has to detach instead of interacting. Thinking a lot means doing little. The enormous commitment dedicated to inner thinking creates a strong emotional detachment from the world, which no longer arouses emotions. Lone thinkers are even unable to love. When they love, it is not to give themselves to another person in a fruitful union but to meditate on love. Durkheim warns against the excesses of intellectual and speculative life. Those who think too much live little. The idea and the movement are two antagonistic forces that progress in the opposite direction. To move is life; to think is to refrain from acting and, in equal measure, refrain from living. This is why the absolute reign of the idea cannot be established because it is death. Sadness is not inherent in things; it is a product of our thinking. Men create sadness completely. Conscience causes man's unhappiness when it proposes itself as an absolute value and object of self-reflection. Stoicism also teaches men to detach themselves from all external to them to live on and for themselves. But at this point, life lacks a purpose, and the doctrine leads to suicide. The self-absorbed suicide meditates serenely and tries to inflict on the individual the least bloody death possible so that the farewell from the world takes on a philosophical and poetic aspect. The body must remain intact, without bloodshed, as happens to those who kill themselves by slowly inhaling a noxious gas.

Alongside this "elevated" form of egoistic suicide, there is also a more vulgar one, which Durkheim calls "epicurean" suicide, typical of someone who lives like a "child and an animal" (Durkheim [1897] 2006, 312), fully aware of their lifestyle, of which they accept all the consequences. Concerned only with satisfying their needs, a person committing epicurean suicide takes their own life as the first impediment to freeing themselves from a life without purpose. Epicurus did not command his disciples to commit suicide but urged them to get rid of life as soon as they lost interest. Knowing that life aimed solely at satisfying the pleasure of the senses hangs by a thread, Epicurean men are taught to give it up easily. Those who choose to be little attached to life need a philosophy that helps them to live close to death. Epicurean suicide needs not philosophical melancholy but cold blood, skepticism, and disenchantment. It is a type of suicide that arises from indifference toward life. It is typical of the pleasure-seeker who kills themselves calmly when they can no longer persevere in their easy existence. In epicurean suicide, self-suppression occurs without hatred, anger, and satisfaction that the intellectual instead feels when savoring suicide. Even more than the latter, those who commit epicurean suicide are devoid of passion. They are not surprised by their extreme action because they have imagined killing themselves many times. They don't even dwell on ingenious preparations. Consistent with their previous life, they try to lessen the pain. Differently, obligatory altruistic suicide has a most violent character and is full of passion. It requires strength, courage, faith, and enthusiasm. It is a type of suicide that does not arise from melancholy or depression but rather from exaltation, evident in the martyrdom of the religious fanatic.

Finally, there is suicide that arises from anger and disappointment. Durkheim names it the suicide of the "misunderstood." In this case, life does not seem empty but painful. It results from hatred toward life in general or a person in particular.

Suicide committed after killing the hated person also falls into this category. It has many features in common with anomic suicide arising from the illusions and disappointments that anomie easily produces. A man who has cultivated high hopes of success does not agree to back off. Faced with the painful reversal of their habits, they look for a real or imaginary culprit against whom to direct their exasperation. This type of suicide can also spring from the destructive anger of those who, while not retreating, are unable to advance based on the hopes they have cultivated. The suicide of the man misunderstood often affects the mediocre who overestimate themselves. Their hopes for glory are too great for their qualities. The suicide of the misunderstood is spreading in the epochs in which anomie rages, and society can no longer clarify to its members what roles they can aspire to. This is the case of those artists who, after so much success, cannot bear some whistling from the public, severe criticism, or declining fame. Durkheim cites the example of Werther, a turbulent soul who kills himself for a thwarted love. In other cases, the man misunderstood begins to feel disgusted with life, falling into a melancholy similar to that of the intellectual egoist, but without having their charm and speculative complexity. The suicide of the misunderstood does not arise from reflection but from frustration. Durkheim, who loved to use examples from novels, cites Chateaubriand's René, who is dissatisfied, unlike Raphaël, who is a meditative annulled in himself. In a brilliant synthesis, Durkheim writes that egoistical and anomic suicide both suffer from "yearning for infinity" (Durkheim [1897] 2006, 317). In the first case, reflective intelligence experiences hypertrophy without measure; in the second case, the immense growth does not concern inner reflection but the desires and passions, which no longer find limits. The first is lost in the infinity of the dream, and the second in the infinity of desire. The individual affected by the anomie is a pure agitated; the egotist, on the other hand, is unsatisfied and withdrawn in the throes of melancholy. Society is no longer able to thrill them, and because of this, they go adrift. Durkheim believes that the best remedy against suicide in complex societies is professional groups or corporations, which is to say, associations made up of workers of the same kind cooperating in the same function. The professional group has the triple advantage over all others of being at all times, in all places, and of having a power that extends over the greater part of existence. Unlike the political society, which intermittently imposes itself on the individual, the professional group is permanently active. It follows the workers even in places where their families cannot accompany them. Wherever they go, the professional group surrounds the worker, calling him to his duties, always ready, as he is, to help him in cases of need. Furthermore, since the workers are committed to working almost all their lives, corporate action orients their actions toward society for their entire existence or almost. In summary, the corporation imposes on its members a system of external rules that make the moral isolation of the individual difficult (Durkheim [1897] 2006, 423).

Composite Types of Suicides

Of particular interest, although little studied, is Durkheim's study of composite suicides, in which he analyzed how the main types of suicides can combine.

Anomie and individualism: Egoistical and anomic suicide are caused by a state of non-regulation. However, the individuals affected by anomie cannot be egotistic because the anomie throws them outside themselves, agitates them, and prevents them from withdrawing into themselves. However, if the anomie is not excessive, the individual can be anomic and egotistic simultaneously. For example, an agitated and disappointed individual may withdraw into themselves due to the frustration that comes with their dissatisfaction. They withdraw from the world, where once they hoped to find great treasures, to close in on themselves empty-handed. On the one hand, they are a victim of the anomie, which leads them to dream of unattainable goals; on the other hand, they fall into egoism due to their inability to achieve their overly ambitious goals.

Anomie and altruism: Anomie is associated with altruism when it creates a state of confusion that excites the altruistic dispositions of the individual. A man hit by an economic failure can commit suicide because they do not want to change their daily habits (anomie) but also to save the family's good name (altruism). Officers and non-commissioned officers often commit suicide when their retirement comes, both because they cannot accept a life of rest (anomie) and because their military culture has educated them to take little account of life (altruism). In this case, a combination occurs between the passionate exaltation of anomic suicide and the courageous indifference to the death of altruistic suicide. Another example of composite suicide in which anomie is combined with altruism is represented by "obsidional" suicides [from the Latin *obsidio*, siege]. The example cited by Durkheim concerns the mass suicide of Jews while the Romans conquered Jerusalem (74 CE). The Jews did not accept giving up their way of life (anomie); they were not afraid to die in the name of their faith (altruism).

Egoism and altruism: Egotism is associated with altruism when society disintegrates and can no longer indicate the goals to be achieved to its members. Under these conditions, some individuals, feeling the harmful effects of egotism, invent an altruistic goal to which they can dedicate themselves through an immeasurable effort of the imagination. In this case, the individual seeks altruism to escape anomie. To succeed in this enterprise, they create a fictitious reality based on a value system in which they become servants. The more they are disappointed with the world around them, which appears dull and depressing (egoism), the more they become idealistic (altruism). Egotistic-altruistic individuals find themselves living a double and contradictory existence. They are individualistic in the real world and wildly altruistic in their imaginary world, inhabited by great ideals characterized by a contradictory combination of egotism and mysticism. When this precarious balance is broken, one of the two predispositions takes over and leads to suicide, which Durkheim calls "stoic" suicide. Stoicism promotes a radical moral individualism and simultaneously exalts universal reason, knowing that man cannot live on egotism alone. Stoic suicide is as apathetic as egoistical suicide because it no longer

finds reasons to live; and as dutiful as the altruistic one because it takes place in compliance with a philosophical system of values. It is melancholy and energetic at the same time. Stoic suicide is typical of decadent people. Young people, in their formation process, have powerful collective ideals, which drag individuals toward a common goal. In contrast, people who have seen and experienced a lot are animated by a conscious egotism and strive to overcome their decadence.

The Elementary Forms of Religious Life

In his masterpiece, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, Durkheim begins his research through sympathetic penetration. Durkheim identifies himself with the first men to take their point of view on the world during the formation of the first primitive and simple form of religion, that is, totemism. After engaging in such an identification process, he engages in causal explanation consistent with the positivistic method.

When the British colonizers pushed into the interior of Australia in the nineteenth century, the life of the Australian aborigines, predominantly hunters and gatherers, aroused great interest in European anthropologists. Two of these, Walter Baldwin Spencer and Francis J. Gillen, studied the aborigines in situ . Their research was one of the primary sources from which Durkheim drew information (Spencer and Gillen 1899)

First of all, what is Durkheim's definition of religion?

According to Durkheim, the essential characteristic of religion is not belief in God, as Buddhism demonstrates: Religion is not defined in relation to the supernatural, which can be present or absent. The first characteristic of religion is the existence of two opposing classes of objects: Sacred objects and profane ones. Unlike the latter, the former are surrounded by awe and veneration because they are considered part of a separate sphere of reality, the sphere of the sacred, which contrasts with that of the profane. In addition to being separate, these two worlds are also hostile and "jealous rivals" (Durkheim [1912] 2001, 39). This explains why the rites of purification and initiation, imposed on those who aspire to assume a role in the sacred sphere, must demonstrate a complete break with the profane sphere. Durkheim cites the examples of monasticism, which separates its places from the profane ones, and mystical asceticism, whose purpose is to eradicate from man all forms of attachment to the profane world.

In addition to the sacred-profane dualism, religion is manifested in rites and ceremonies, which require organization. This is why every religion has a "church": A term by which Durkheim does not mean an elite of power, the clergy, but an organized and institutionalized community of believers, which constitutes the perimeter in which religious practices take place. The church's presence distinguishes religion from magic, which has rituals but does not have the church: The magician has a personal following, not a community of believers. Religion is a collective thing inseparable from the idea of the Church. Thus, Durkheim arrives at the following definition: "A religion is a unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred

things, that is to say, things set apart and forbidden—beliefs and practices which unite into one single moral community called a Church, all those adhere to them" (Durkheim [1912] 2001, 46).

In *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, Durkheim continues to question the elements that ensure the cohesion of society, providing a functionalist answer: Religion fulfills the function of creating a collective morality that unites individuals. His fundamental thesis is that the first form of religion, which he identifies in the totemism of the Aborigines of Australia, was born from the "collective effervescence," as he names it, caused by the physical approach between primitive men accustomed to living an isolated and emotionless life. Also, in this work, Durkheim exalts the role of the "passionate energies" in the formation process of society. Durkheim primarily studied the Arunta, an indigenous tribe of central Australia, mainly settled around the MacDonnell Ranges and along the furrow of the Finke River.

Let's follow his reconstruction in causal order.

The life of primitive Australians was divided into two phases in stark contrast to each other.

The economy dominated the first phase and took place mainly in isolation. Individual families procured their food independently of each other. Each family thought of themselves and lived independently, dedicating themselves to fishing, hunting, and gathering grains or herbs. These activities set the pace of a "monotonous, lazy, and dull life" (Durkheim [1912] 2001, 162).

Conversely, the second phase occurred in a group and was activated every time a clan was summoned to celebrate a religious ceremony. The population thickened, and the tribe gathered together in full force. Since primitive men had poor emotional control, they easily reached an exasperated degree of exaltation. Driven by violent overexcitation, physical and mental, the members of the tribe broke the molds related to ordinary morality and began to practice sex in a free and unbridled way. Men exchanged wives, and incest was practiced with impunity under the gaze of all, although they were considered abominable in the ordinary conditions of life. Such ceremonies did not last for a single night but for days and sometimes weeks. The social life of primitive Australians oscillated between the absence of emotions and hyper-excitement.

In the throes of this explosion of physical and psychic life, man no longer recognized themselves and had the sensation of being guided by an external force, which took possession of their body. Life appeared to them divided between two heterogeneous and incompatible worlds: On the one hand, secular and profane life, dedicated to material activities conducted in solitude; on the other, the sacred life, dedicated to collective ceremonies. While modern man prays in all moments of their life, the primitive man only devoted themselves to religious life on the occasion of collective assemblies. According to Durkheim, primitive man is not deceived about the existence of a force that raised them to a higher life. That force exists, but it does not derive from an animal or a plant but from the moral authority of society, which pushes individuals to sacrifice their selfishness for the collective good. Primitive man deceives themselves about the source of the sacred: The overwhelming force from which he is driven comes from society. The center of the cult is not in the

totem but in the clan. Society is for its members what God is for the faithful, that is to say, a superior being. God and society are one and the same: "The god of the clan, the totemic principle, must therefore be the clan itself, but transfigured and imagined in the physical form of the plant or animal species that serve as totems" (Durkheim [1912] 2001, 154). Religion is the product of delirium, in which men feel transferred to a world different from the one they have before their eyes.

Societies founded on scientific rationality tend to see only a negative fact in delirium. Yet delirium is not useless: It performs the function of binding individuals together. Psychic exaltation, released by religious fervor, is a powerful social glue. The first religious idea seems to have arisen in these effervescent social environments and from this effervescence. This is precisely its origin as it is confirmed by the fact that, in Australia, religious activity is almost entirely concentrated when these assemblies are held.

The Elementary Forms of Religious Life reaffirms one of Durkheim's fundamental ideas, according to which collective representations, which arise from emotions, have greater power than judgments of fact based on reason. Durkheim called himself a "rationalist," committed to extending scientific rationalism to human conduct to transform sociology into a mature science. However, he was convinced that cold scientific reasoning could not supplant a deeply rooted collective emotion. Passion has a collective mobilization power superior to reason: "Even today, if science happens to go against a strong current of public opinion, it risks losing its credibility" (Durkheim [1912] 2001, 156).

In Chap. 7 of *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, Durkheim's core thesis on the birth of the first form of religion is developed with great clarity. Given the importance of this page in the history of sociology, it is necessary to read it in its entirety:

> The very fact of assembling is an exceptionally powerful stimulant. Once the individuals are assembled, their proximity generates a kind of electricity that quickly transports them to an extraordinary degree of exaltation. Every emotion expressed is retained without resistance in all those minds so open to external impressions, each one echoing the others. The initial impulse thus becomes amplified as it reverberates, like an avalanche gathering force as it goes. And as passions so strong and uncontrolled are bound to seek outward expression, there are violent gestures, shouts, even howls, deafening noises of all sorts from all sides that intensify even more the state they express. Probably because a collective feeling cannot be expressed collectively unless a certain order is observed that permits the group's harmonious movements, these gestures and cries are inclined to be rhythmic and regulated, and become chants and dances. But in taking on a more regulated form they lose none of their natural violence; the regulated tumult is still a tumult. The human voice is inadequate to the task, and is artificially reinforced: boomerangs are knocked together, bull-roarers are whirled. The original function of these instruments, so widely used in Australian religious ceremonies, was probably to give more satisfying translation to this excitement. But even as they translate, they reinforce. The effervescence often becomes so intense it leads to unpredictable behaviour. The passions unleashed are so impetuous they cannot be contained. The ordinary conditions of life are set aside so definitively and so consciously that people feel the need to put themselves above and beyond customary morality. The sexes violate the rules of sexual conduct. Men exchange their wives. Sometimes even incestuous unions, which are harshly condemned as abominations in normal times, are openly contracted with impunity. (Durkheim [1912] 2001, 162–163)

Religious Education and the "Double Man"

Since society could not live only on collective delirium, once the totem is created, it develops religious education, introducing rules and prohibitions. We thus pass from religion as an emotional delirium, in which everything is lawful, to religion as a discipline, in which everything is subjected to collective surveillance. Religion, here is another of its fundamental functions, provides that education in sacrifice and submission which promotes altruism and accustoms individuals to bear social constraints. It teaches men to do violence to their natural tendencies, transforming sacrifice and suffering for society into sources of jubilation and self-realization. Man is crossed by two forces in constant struggle with each other. On the one hand, the rules of conduct and thought set by society; on the other, individual tendencies and their most elementary instincts. Durkheim, influenced by Charles Renouvier (Stedman Jones 1995) describes the perennial struggle between altruism and egoism through the concept of the "homo duplex." Society pursues goals other than individual ones but achieves its goals through individuals who, by learning to submit to God, learn to submit to society. Each man carries within themselves a force that pushes them toward egoism and another that pushes them toward altruism. While egoism arises spontaneously in men, altruism arises from an act of force of society, which imposes on individuals the necessary discipline to achieve collective goals. Morality begins when men begin to worry about and for others. Religious education is that force that leads to altruism. The homo duplex theory is summarized in one of the most concise and incisive Durkheim's essays titled "The Dualism of Human Nature and Its Social Conditions," published in 1916 and recently reevaluated (Fish 2013)

According to Durkheim:

> This duality corresponds, in sum, with the double existence that we lead simultaneously: one purely individual, which has its roots in our organism, the other social, which is nothing except an extension of society. The very nature of the elements between which there exists the antagonism we have described is evidence that this is its origin. In effect, it is between the sensations and the sensory appetites on the one hand, and intellectual and moral life on the other, that the conflicts take place, of which we have given examples. It is evident that passions and egoistic tendencies derive from our individual constitution, while our rational activity, whether practical or theoretical, is closely dependent on social causes. (Durkheim [1916] 2005, 44)

The distinction between society and the individual underlies the distinction between soul and body. Man feels double because he is. Part of him is noble and altruistic and cares about the needs of society; the other part is mean and egoistic and cares about the pleasures of the body. The perception of the difference between the altruistic world of society and the egoistic world of the person is also the basis of the distinction between the sacred and the profane. The sacred refers to what is noble, superior and independent, while the profane refers to what is vulgar, inferior and dependent. The profane depends on the sacred as the individual depends on society. In Melanesia and Polynesia, influential men possess "mana" or spiritual

power. Durkheim, who does not believe in supernatural forces, says that it is public opinion that attributes mana, as evidenced by the fact that sometimes men attribute a sacred character to those who do not deserve it. Men are not influential because they have mana, but they have mana because they are influential. Man is unable to understand the psychic mechanisms that society uses to achieve its ends and attributes the power to guide events to an external force, which really exists, but it is not God but society itself with its moral authority. It is understandable that man confuses society with God since society gives them everything. Men speak a language they have not created and use tools they have not invented. Each new generation receives a wealth of knowledge accumulated from previous generations. All these vital goods belong to society; if they were lost, the single individual could not rebuild them with their own strength.

The Birth of the Totem and the AETR Scheme

Since the clan is a society that is not very solid, it needs an emblem that represents the group more than ever. The totem reminds us that a community participates in the same moral life. The clan cannot define its identity either on the basis of a leader, since its central authority is uncertain and unstable, or on the basis of the territory, since it practices nomadism. Once it has removed the name and the totemic image, the clan ceases to exist.

But why was the strength of society conceived in the form of an animal or a plant? The starting point is always the "rudimentary intelligence" of the primitives, who cannot reconstruct the social forces that influence the psychic life of the clan and thus reduce collective excitement to the totem pole. Worshiping an animal or a plant is a practice within reach of all human intelligence, even the less developed ones.

With his theory of totemism, Durkheim disproved the famous Latin phrase: *Primus in orbe deos fecit timor* (fear first produced gods in the world). Men did not create religion because, terrified by the forces of nature, they wanted to explain the lightning that tears apart the tree. The primitive Australians did not consider their gods enemies to whom they had to ingratiate themselves. On the contrary, they saw the gods as benevolent figures who lived amid the tribe. This explains why they deified, first of all, plants and animals instead of the stars and the sun. Animals and plants are close; the stars are very far away. The first totemic emblems express proximity, warmth, closeness, and not detachment and distance. They were chosen from among the most common animals and plants where the clan met in assembly: The gods do not loom very high in the tribe, and the totem does not crush any man with the enormity of their power. The gods are close to men as benevolent friends. The totemic cult was not born from anguish and fear of death but from joy and love for life. It is celebrated with songs and dances. The terrible and vengeful gods appear later in the story.

Since Durkheim's thought on the origins of religion is complex, I tried to schematize it in four phases, which form the acronym AETR, or Association, Effervescence, Totems, and Rites:

(A) Association: The primitives meet, and physical proximity releases an irrepressible frenzy.
(E) Effervescence: The irrepressible frenzy unleashes a collective delirium. Unrestrained movements caused by collective effervescence find rhythm and coordination through singing and dancing. The tumult continues but takes on a regulated course.
(T) Totem: The members of the tribe create the totem to explain the delirium into which they have fallen and justify the behaviors they condemn in ordinary life, such as incest.
(R) Rites: To keep the sense of community alive, which risks weakening with the return of the tribe members to their isolated lives, the primitives give life to a system of rites, distinguishing the sacred and the profane, on which religious education is based.

In *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, Durkheim insists on the limited intelligence of primitives, unable to understand the psychic forces by which they are moved, and constantly emphasizes the analogies with moderns. Aborigines of Australia worship the totem pole like soldiers of complex societies worship the national flag. In the minds of the soldiers, the flag is not a simple piece of cloth but a representation of the homeland. In the fight against the enemy, the soldiers feel they are living a heady, morally superior experience, where society opposes the individual and altruism dominates egoism.

Durkheim also attributed to religious rites the function of having developed the six fundamental categories of thought in men: Time, space, classification, force, causality, and totality (Rawls 1996).

In controversy with gnoseological apriorism, Durkheim believes that these categories, representing the existential basis of knowledge, are not innate. They are not found in man's mind at birth but are learned in the relationship with society, mediated by religion. Categorical knowledge is fundamental because it allows us to give order to the world, transforming our sensory impressions into abstract concepts. For example, "time" comes from the way society dictates the rhythms of life to its members; the "force" arises from the clash with social forces; the "totality" is the representation of society itself. If men did not share the categories of time, space, classification, force, causality, and totality, they could not interact, and social life would be impossible. To exist, society needs logical conformity as well as moral conformity. Religious thought organizes the world, fragmented and dispersed, into an ordered and coherent totality.

The Causal Explanation and the Method of Concomitant Variations

The reader will have noticed how often we have encountered the terms "cause" and "function" in this chapter. It is no coincidence. Durkheim believed that the sociological explanation had two tasks to perform, that is, to identify both the causes and functions of social phenomena. Many sociologists, Durkheim points out, limit themselves to showing the utility and function of social phenomena, but the functional explanation alone is insufficient to complete a sociological explanation. Explaining what a social fact is for is not the same as explaining how it was born and why it is what it is. The functional and causal explanations represent two issues that must not be confused. When we are about to explain a social phenomenon, we must therefore seek separately the efficient cause that produces it and the function that it fulfills.

According to Durkheim, the causal explanation should precede the functional explanation because, logically, the search for causes comes before the determination of the effects. However, Durkheim continues, we must not lose sight of the feedback of the effect on the cause. For example, the shock of the sentiment causes the punishment, but then the punishment restores force to its cause, represented by a moral sentiment. If society stopped punishing a particular crime, its members would get used to living with it, and with time, the collective sentiment would stop feeling offended.

The reason why the study of causes is necessary depends on the fact that a function is not born because it is beneficial. In other words, the usefulness of a function is not its cause.

But what is a function?

To Durkheim, "function" is any activity that satisfies a need. For example, digestion has the function of incorporating food substances into the body; respiration has the function of introducing the oxygen necessary for life into the lungs, the division of labor has the function of attenuating the struggle for existence, and so on. Durkheim's functional analysis consists in asking which need a function corresponds to.

Believing that a function originates from its usefulness would lead to erroneous reasoning. To understand Durkheim's warning, we need an example in which the usefulness of a function is mistakenly considered the cause from which it originated. Since Durkheim gives no examples in the fifth chapter of *The Rules of Sociological Method*, I propose the following mistaken sentence to rectify it soon after: "Since religion is useful for ensuring social cohesion, then social cohesion is the cause of religion."

Why does Durkheim think this way of thinking is wrong?

The reason is simple, and, in part, we already know it. Durkheim does not think that men can consciously create, through a preordained plan, the functions of a social phenomenon, such as religion or organic solidarity. It is precisely for this reason that he prefers to speak in terms of "functions" and not of "ends." This discourse will become clearer recalling the AETR scheme: Totemism was born from a

chain of events which began with the association. Primitive men did not meet with the aim of giving rise to a religion, which would then perform the beneficial function of guaranteeing their social cohesion. This was not their intention, and they did not imagine it would happen. So much so that, even after the birth of totemism, the primitives continued to ignore its social usefulness. A similar argument applies to the birth of the division of labor in society. According to Durkheim's thesis, it did not arise from the reasoning of a group of men on the usefulness of dividing labor to produce a greater quantity of goods in less time. The causes of the division of labor were the increase in the density and volume of the society. No man created social differentiation after predicting and calculating the benefits it would bring to the future of humanity.

Durkheim believed a scientific explanation must establish cause-and-effect relationships between phenomena. However, men rarely focus on the power of causes, being enraptured by the urgency of needs. For example, men may feel a strong need to reinvigorate family ties, which will not undergo any change unless a cause intervenes to initiate the change process. Similarly, to restore lost authority to the government, it is necessary to develop a tradition, a common sentiment, and a collective identity, addressing the causes from which a government derives its authority. If it is impossible to bring about such causes, the things one wants will not occur. Conversely, things that are not needed can continue to exist if and to the extent that the complexes of causes on which they depend persist (Poggi 2018).

The reasons why Durkheim attached so much importance to the discovery of causes is scientific and pedagogical. As we have seen, Durkheim believed that good sociologists make themselves useful to society to improve it. The discovery of a cause, in the social sciences as in medical science, is always an exciting experience because it places men in the condition of reforming society, revolutionizing it, or immobilizing it by intervening in the decisive factors of social change. Identifying the cause of suicide, so to speak, was Durkheim's gift to the society of his time.

So far, Durkheim has clarified the difference between causal and functional explanations. The delicate question of the rules for producing evidence in social science remains to be addressed. The question with which we close this chapter is: What is the best method to verify the correctness of a causal statement? According to Durkheim, the primary method to succeed in the probative enterprise is the method of concomitant variations, defined as "the supreme instrument for sociological research (Durkheim [1895] 2013, 105).

Before proceeding, we must clarify a basic question: Are Durkheim's studies based on the comparative method or the method of indirect experimentation?

Durkheim compares different societies in time and space. Precisely because they are different, Durkheim identifies some common elements to compare in each of them. For example, mechanical and organic solidarity belong to two different societies but are particular types of "social solidarity." Durkheim can thus compare simple societies with complex ones, repressive law with restitutive law, totemic rites with Catholic ones, and so on. This comparison aims to identify the causes and not to provide a simple description. To Durkheim: "Comparative sociology is not a

special branch of sociology; it is sociology itself, in so far as it ceases to be purely descriptive and aspires to account for facts" (Durkheim [1895] 2013, 109).

Durkheim made extensive use of the method of concomitant variation in his research on suicide, where, for example, the level of anomie of certain groups and their suicide rate vary together since two variables are to be regarded as concomitant when they occur simultaneously. In *The Division of Labor in Society*, Durkheim identifies a concomitant variation between the growth of the complexity of society and the restitutive law.

Durkheim defined the method of concomitant variations so clearly that any synthesis is superfluous: "We have only one way of demonstrating that one phenomenon is the cause of another. This is to compare the cases where they are both simultaneously present or absent, to discover whether the variations they display in these different combinations of circumstances provide evidence that one depends upon the other" (Durkheim [1895] 2013). According to Durkheim, constant concomitance is a law in itself. After demonstrating that two phenomena vary equally in several cases, one can be sure that one is in the presence of law.

Suppose the level of social integration and the suicide rate of specific categories or groups vary constantly. In that case, Durkheim believes he is authorized to establish the following law: "Suicide varies inversely with the degree of integration of religious society. Suicide varies inversely with the degree of integration of domestic society. Suicide varies inversely with the degree of integration of political society" (Durkheim [1897] 2006, 167). This passage from Durkheim is clear.

Yet, John Stuart Mill was able to be even more understandable, explaining that the following canon governs the method of concomitant variations: "Whatever phenomenon varies in any manner whenever another phenomenon varies in some particular manner, is either a cause or an effect of that phenomenon, or is connected with it through some fact of causation" (Mill [1843] 1930, 263).

However, Mill was critical of the method of concomitant variation, and here is the reason.

Suppose we can identify two nations that only agree with the protectionist system and industrial prosperity. It is true that, in this case, it would be possible to derive a direct relationship between protectionism and economic well-being, but only with the certainty that such well-being can have only one cause. However, the cause of a social phenomenon is never unique. This is why the supposition of the unity of the cause—Mill argues—is at an immeasurable distance from the truth. The causes of every social phenomenon we are particularly interested in, security, wealth, freedom, good governance, public virtue, or their opposite, are infinitely numerous. No cause is sufficient in itself to produce any of these phenomena.

Criticism of Durkheim

The praises and criticisms of Durkheim are renewed with the passing of generations (Lukes 1985) as evidenced by the need to found an academic journal, *Durkheimian Studies*, to absorb at least a small part of the academic publications inspired by

Durkheim. A collection of critical literature relating to suicide research alone would require ponderous work (Selvin 1958; Pope 1976). Here, I will limit myself to reporting only the most recurrent criticisms.

Durkheim's methodological collectivism was rejected by Karl Popper, who affirmed that "society does not exist" and that one should always be aware that the word "society" is only a mental construct to simplify reality, which is made only of individuals (Popper [1944], 2013). Men, not societies, are good or bad, critical or dogmatic, lazy or enterprising. Dario Antiseri, a severe critic of Durkheim, summarized the main criticisms of Durkheim's methodological collectivism with a blizzard of questions. Who has ever met society? Who has ever interviewed it? Society does not cry, it does not laugh, does not buy and does not sell, it does not walk, it does not pray, and it does not swear; it does not think and does not make mistakes, and therefore has no faults (Antiseri 1992).

What is valid for the concept of society is valid for the concepts of state, church, party, country, social class, economic system, and the electorate. Put simply, it is valid for all the concepts that make up the rib of the social sciences. No one has ever seen the Internal Revenue Service. One only meets bureaucrats who impose, perhaps with the help of other individuals—policemen—the payment of taxes; no one can corrupt the Internal Revenue Service; this or that bureaucrat can be corrupted. Nor is it the party that imposes a will. The will of a party—Antiseri presses—is always the will of that leader, that small group or clique of individuals. It is not the trade union that is fighting. It is always individuals who have certain ideas and who set specific goals to fight or strike. There is no will of the state because the state does not exist; what exists is only the will of this or that minister, or of these or those general managers who, perhaps on a board of directors, have managed to impose their will or get the other members to accept their proposals (Antiseri 1992, 17).

Many sociologists have criticized Durkheim's "sociologism"—a pejorative term for reducing all phenomena to sociological explanations—presupposing a sharp dichotomy between society and the individual. The sociological thesis, according to which society is sacred and the individual is profane, supports Durkheim's pedagogical thesis, according to which society is a source of altruism. In contrast, the individual is a source of egoism. For Friedrich Jonas, Durkheim was a "radical dualist" (Jonas 1970, 390). In other words, Durkheim has not grasped the dialectical link between society and the individual, closing himself in a dualism that creates continuous contradictions. If everything originates from society, individual talent should depend on society itself. Instead, Durkheim imagines that individual talents are independent from society, as we have seen in the research on suicide, when he hypothesizes the existence of a society in which all individuals start with the same material resources but then end up distinguishing themselves on the basis of intelligence and skill at work. Durkheim has founded a limited sociologism he has not even been able to be consistent with. In his *History of Sociological Thought*, Alberto Izzo, who dislikes the "sectarian" way in which Durkheim denied the influence of extra-social factors among the causes of suicide, wrote that Durkheim is to be criticized for assuming a clear dichotomy between society and the individual, attributing to the former every morality and to the individual only egoistic instincts. By

reducing the individual to this alone, everything is seen to proceed by society and as a function of society.

Durkheim emphasized the importance of the causal factor of society compared to other factors that are inevitably intertwined with it. The example of *Suicide*, in which the influence of non-social causes in explaining this phenomenon is denied with sectarianism, is perhaps the most evident. However, such sociologism is not always consistently followed by Durkheim, who sometimes closes himself in blatant contradictions. Moving from the assumption that society precedes and coins the individual to the point that the individual separated from society is left with only egoistic impulses, every reference made by Durkheim to individual talents can only appear contradictory (Izzo 1994, 207).

In his *Farewell to the World: A History of Suicide*, Marzio Barbagli developed two main criticisms of Durkheim's *Suicide* (Barbagli 2015). The first concerns integration and social regulation, the two great causes of voluntary death. These two concepts would end up overlapping, making the distinction between anomic suicide and egoistic suicide—which Durkheim would not have clearly distinguished—useless.

The second criticism invests the official statistics used by Durkheim, which would underestimate the real data because the relatives of the suicides, out of fear or shame, tended to hide the true cause of death and because the recording statistical apparatus was not particularly efficient in the time of Durkheim (Jack D. Douglas 1967). According to these critics, the increase in the suicide rate in complex societies is not due to a decrease in the level of social integration but to an improvement in the statistical registration of voluntary deaths.

Barbagli noted that, according to Durkheim's studies, our societies should have witnessed the disappearance of altruistic suicides, typical of simple societies, and a surge of anomic and egoistic suicides, typical of industrial societies. However, during the last forty years of the twentieth century, there was an extraordinary surge in altruistic suicides. Barbagli identifies the "altruistic turn" in the suicide of the Buddhist monk who set himself on fire in 1963 in Saigon to protest against the government of his country, followed by other similar cases, including that of the student Jan Palach who set himself on fire on January 19, 1969, in Prague, in protest against the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia. The altruistic suicide then received a powerful impetus in the Middle East by the Hezbollah militant who, on October 23, 1983, detonated a truck full of bombs near a US Marine building. It is all too easy to mention suicides in the name of al Qaeda, ISIS, al Shabaab, or Boko Haram.

As for egoistic and anomic suicides, Barbagli observes that they have declined in Western Europe rather than increased. Despite these two tremendous and unexpected processes, Durkheim's theory of suicide still dominates social science today. The growing importance of altruistic suicides in much of the world and the rapid decline of egoistic and anomic suicides in Western Europe cannot be traced to changes in integration and social regulation. Barbagli's book wants to prove that altruistic suicides do not occur only when there is an excess of integration and when there is a state of absolute subordination of the individual to their group. It is certainly not for this reason that, in the last forty years, thousands of people (often with

a high level of education, a cosmopolitan mentality, knowledge of several languages, and a great familiarity with the immaterial World Wide Web) have sacrificed themselves for a collective cause to help their people and fight their enemies.

From a methodological point of view, Neil J. Smelser studied Durkheim's comparative analysis strategies in depth, sometimes reaching severe conclusions. According to Smelser, Durkheim employed the method of concomitant variation in widely questionable ways. Data from *The Division of Labor in Society* are far from adequate to produce irrefutable proof. Furthermore, Durkheim's dichotomous comparisons between primitive and advanced societies are oversimplified, without considering that his analysis is based on a too-simple evolution scheme. Smelser, taking up some of Mill's criticisms of the method of concomitant variations, says the causes that could explain the birth of the division of labor are much more numerous than those proposed by Durkheim. Rather than recognizing the impossibility of empirically proving the causal relations enunciated in his study, Durkheim insists on their validity. When he realizes that his reasoning is unable to explain some of his causal statements, he abandons the method of concomitant variation to embrace a multiplicity of alternative strategies, including logical deduction, further comparisons, analogy, and thought experiments, up to the use of expressions that are anything but scientific such as: "On the basis of what is generally known" and "As everyone knows." However, sociologists should never use such expressions to prove their thesis. They must always provide precise data and historical references instead of relying on popular wisdom when the empirical evidence does not support their theories. The most significant criticism refers to the fact that Durkheim limited himself to mentioning simple correlations. Yet, this method does not guarantee a causal association between the variables. Why, for example, should the division of labor causally precede the development of the restitutive law? Couldn't it be the opposite? It is also possible that the gradual erosion of criminal punishment for a different range of activities (e.g., usury) has constituted a condition that allowed the people new activity directions. The only concomitant variables used by Durkheim, particularly when applied dichotomously, cannot answer these problems—Smelser insists—since no effort can be systematically made to control the influence of each of the most critical variables or other possible operational variables.

Durkheim insisted on the validity of the causal relationships stated despite the impossibility of developing a robust empirical demonstration. To overcome these weaknesses in his research, he relied on various strategies other than concomitant variation, such as logical deduction, further comparisons, analogy, imaginary experiments, and appeal to "what is generally known," an expression that social scientists should always avoid. After reading *The Division of Labor in Society*, Smelser is not satisfied with Durkheim's explanation and asks why the division of labor should cause social solidarity (Smelser 2013).

Durkheim has been criticized for his "conservatism," but judging his political ideas based on today's criteria is unfair. They should be considered in the period in which he lived.

Concerning the "charge" of conservativism, Durkheim has been criticized for devoting his best intellectual energies to social cohesion and social order due to his

moderate and bourgeois background, which also affected his ideas on women and family. Scholars of sociological theory distinguished among "conservatives," "status quo conservatives," and "reactionary conservatives" (Adams and Sydie 2001, 9), and some of them concluded that Durkheim was profoundly loyal to the status quo but was not a reactionary thinker (Lamanna 2001, 25). To others, Durkheim had progressive ideas compared to the time in which he lived, so much so that he sided in favor of Alfred Dreyfus (La Capra 1985, 73). There is no consensus on Durkheim's political orientation; he has been labeled a "capitalist," "reformer," "radical," "socialist," and "neoliberal" (Lehmann 1994, 8–9).

Anthony Giddens traced Durkheim's predilection for social order to the public and private events that marked his life (Giddens 1986).

What are they?

As for public events, they were turbulent and bloody. Born on April 15, 1858, in Epinal, Lorraine, Émile Durkheim grew up in a climate marked by the defeat of France at the hands of Bismarck's Prussia. The Franco-Prussian War of 1870–1871 was the origin of that French nationalism, which won over many French people, including Durkheim, who harbored feelings of revenge, especially since the defeat had provoked a terrible civil war, the Paris Commune (March–May 1871). On January 18, 1871, William I was crowned German Emperor at Versailles. In addition to inflicting this humiliation on the French people, he wrested two territories from France, Alsace and Lorraine, where Durkheim was born. At least in Durkheim, this aspiration to retaliate, instead of translating into a desire for aggression toward the outside, took the form of a pungent need for internal cohesion. Instead of hating Germany, Durkheim was fascinated by it, where, between 1885 and 1886, he spent a year studying at Wilhelm Wundt's school (de Wolf 1987), which would have had a decisive influence on his training (Fitzi and Marcucci 2017). He admired Germany's ability to integrate citizens into a cohesive community based on respect for the state. The problem of social order was central in Durkheim's France, in search of a political and cultural model on which to cement a new order after so many internal conflicts. It was a conflict that caused tremendous pain in Durkheim's life: The death of his son André in the Balkans (1915) during World War I (Smith et al. 2003, 72). Undoubtedly, Durkheim was more interested in explaining consensus than conflict, but he was never a backward conservative. He favored republicanism and progressive reformism and was hostile to the reactionary monarchy and the Catholic right.

As for private events, Durkheim grew up in a strict Jewish family. He was not educated to rebel but to obey. His father was an austere chief rabbi in whose footsteps the little Émile seemed to have to follow. Durkheim initially attended rabbinic school but then broke with family tradition and declared himself an "agnostic." The order and discipline which Durkheim deals with in his studies were also the foundation of his life.

Durkheim studied the most common phenomena in the life of men, namely consent and social order. Insurrections and revolutions are, in fact, exceptional phenomena in the life of any society. Men live in discipline every day of their life or almost every day. Even when they violently rebel against the organization of society, it is to

build a new discipline and social order. Studying consensus and the social order is not an ideological fault or a choice to be justified but a fundamental contribution to understanding society. The criticisms should not be aimed at the object of study or the approach but rather at how Durkheim conducted his research and, possibly, at the conclusions he reached.

Durkheim and Marx

At this point, we can trace the main differences between Marx and Durkheim, which are also considered the main differences between the sociology of conflict and functionalism today.

First, Marx did not consciously dedicate himself to enhancing sociology in his works. On the contrary, Durkheim devoted the best part of his intellectual life to defining the epistemological status of this discipline to distinguish it from the other social sciences and even assign it a preeminent role.

Second, Marx developed a reductionist approach to studying society, according to which political phenomena are traceable to economic phenomena. Although Engels later stated that economic forces are ultimately decisive in the "last resort," ignoring the reductionism implicit in historical materialism is difficult. On the other hand, Engels himself wrote that there is nothing more powerful and decisive than the "economic movement." In contrast, Durkheim developed the idea that social facts have a sui generis nature, a nature of their own, and cannot be reduced to economic phenomena. Sociological phenomena are not socio-economic phenomena; they are sociological phenomena, and that's it. Sociology is an autonomous discipline and does not need to be supported by economics.

Third, Marx supported the dialectical method, while Durkheim defended the empirical-positivist one. According to Marx, the researcher must embrace the largest possible number of phenomena and then consider the interdependence of their dialectical relations. On the other hand, Durkheim defended a method based on the preliminary use of definitions to circumscribe the perimeter of the research as much as possible. Durkheim thought that scientific enterprise was the enemy of too-broad speculative horizons. Durkheim's methodological imperative is to delimit the object of study; Marx's is to broaden it as much as possible.

Fourth, Durkheim's sociology is sociology based on causal analysis. A social phenomenon is explained by a social phenomenon of the same kind from which it is preceded. For their part, Marx and Engels were critical of this approach. Friedrich Engels, in his October 27, 1890, letter to Conrad Schmidt praising Hegel's legacy, dislikes those scholars who lack the dialectic mentality and see the cause on one side only and the effect on the other, and sees this as an empty abstraction (Engels 1986). In the real world, such metaphysical polar oppositions occur only in moments of crisis. The whole great course of development takes place in the form of reciprocal action, albeit of unequal forces, of which the economic trend is by far the strongest, the most original, and the most decisive.

However, Engels was in no doubt about the ultimate supremacy of economic development (Engels [1890] 1986, 684–689).

Fifth, Marx loved social conflict, while Durkheim favored social peace. Although both believed that science should have the practical function of improving the quality of human life in society, Marx used his "science" to disintegrate bourgeois society and Durkheim to make it more cohesive. Marx thought that the destructive conflicts between the proletarian and bourgeois classes had a beneficial function for the progress of society. Durkheim worked to prevent the bourgeois and proletarians from colliding in a conflict to death. Marx praised the Paris Commune of 1871, while Durkheim cursed it for the blood it had shed among the French, armed against each other in a fratricidal war.

Sixth, Marx supported proletarian internationalism, while Durkheim was fascinated by French nationalism.

Conclusion

This chapter has discussed Durkheim's main works that laid the foundations for one of the most fascinating debates of contemporary sociological theory, namely the micro–macro debate, which we will study in depth in the chapter on rational choice theory. All in all, the theory of social facts has never been disproved. As we will see in the chapter on phenomenological sociology, it has been corrected and integrated with new theories but has never been proved wrong. Sociologists critical of Durkheim have never denied that individuals are born into a social world that transfers meanings to the child. If anything, they tried to explain how individuals participate in the social construction of reality, but they never denied its existence and coercive power.

The concept of "anomie" is still one of the most used today. Durkheim's concept of anomie has become a crucial tool in understanding the process of radicalization toward terrorism. The concept of "anomie" is also important from a pedagogical point of view. All educators share the idea that adolescents must learn to control their desires. Individuals who relentlessly pursue goals they do not have the means to achieve are never happy.

However, we must be careful not to misunderstand Durkheim in his thinking that the problem of anomie is not a problem of the individual, but of society. Durkheim does not think that adolescents can learn to curb their desires with adult sermons. Suppose society is organized to stimulate individuals to desire without limits. In this case, the sermons of adults may not yield the desired results as they often contradict their actions and practical examples. Thanks to Durkheim, we know that "socialization" is a broader concept than "education." Often, a society's education and socialization can contradict each other. For instance, the moral principles taught in schools may conflict with the values portrayed in cinema, television, social media, politics, or the music industry. We will find this idea of Durkheim's at the basis of Merton's studies on deviance.

Despite his improper use of official statistics, Durkheim's theory on suicide is still relevant and represents the starting point of all sociological research on suicide. However, there is no doubt that Durkheim's prediction of decreasing altruistic suicides has proven wrong. Today we live in an era characterized by the altruistic suicides of terrorists.

Self-Test Path

1. What is Durkheim's definition of "social fact"?
2. What are the rules of sociological method?
3. What are the two forms of solidarity?
4. How did the division of labor come about, according to Durkheim?
5. What is the role of the imagination in developing civilization?
6. What are the main types of suicides?
7. What is Durkheim's definition of religion?
8. Can you please talk about the AETR scheme?
9. What does the "homo duplex" theory affirm?
10. What are the two types of explanations in sociology?
11. What is the concomitant variation method?
12. Could you please discuss the main criticisms that Durkheim received?

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